

Approved For Release 2008/03/10 : CIA-RDP97T00975A004500010001-0

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12 May 1959

Copy No. C 62

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



DOCUMENT NO. 1
NO CHANGE IN CLASS.
DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C
NEXT REVIEW DATE: 2010
AUTH. HR 70-2
DATE 4-14-86 REVIEWER:

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State Dept. review completed

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12 May 1959

DAILY BRIEF

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I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

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Qatar: The five-day strike last week of Qatar Oil Company workers in the British-protected Persian Gulf Sheikdom of Qatar reflected carefully guarded preparation, in the view of the American Consulate General in Dhahran. Local sheiks and British political officials apparently were reluctant to use strong measures against the strike, which ended with the government largely accepting the workers' demands. The authorities are still unable to identify the strike leaders, and further unrest seems likely.

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Burma-USSR: Soviet prestige in Burma, damaged by the recent furor over an attempt by the Soviet military attaché to defect, faces another setback in the upcoming libel trial of a TASS representative in Rangoon. The suit, filed by an influential Burmese editor, is receiving wide publicity. [The Soviet Embassy, which thus far has shielded the TASS representative, has attempted to quash the case.]

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Qatar Oil Workers Strike

A five-day strike last week by workers of the Qatar Petroleum Company (QPC), an affiliate of Iraq Petroleum Company, demonstrated careful preparation, in the view of the American Consulate General in Dhahran. British and local government officials in this small British-protected state on the Persian Gulf are concerned over the effectiveness of the strike organization which immobilized almost the entire sheikdom. Thus far the government and QPC have been unable to identify strike leaders.

About half the QPC workers are Qataris; most of the rest are Indians and Pakistanis. In the early stages of the strike only the Qataris participated, but they soon forced the Indian and Pakistani workers to join. By late in the week the strike had spread to government offices.

Support for the strike apparently stems from widespread dissatisfaction with the extravagances of the ruling family, although Arab resentment of the superior pay and status granted more highly skilled Indian and Pakistani workers was probably also a factor. The workers formulated specific demands only when the government began to react.

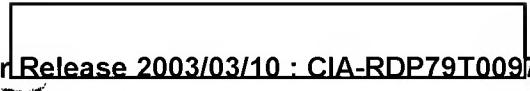
The strikers have returned to work, but the issue is not yet settled. Sheik Ahmad, son of the Ruler, publicly has given in to most of the strikers' demands, but the QPC is unwilling to settle on this basis. Qatar itself is relatively unimportant in Middle East oil production, but the example could be contagious.

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Turkish Defense Minister Fears Further Repression of Opposition

Turkish Defense Minister Etem Menderes--no relative of Prime Minister Adnan Menderes--considers that the prime minister is falling more under the influence of government leaders who favor stronger repressive measures against the Republican People's party (RPP), the principal opposition party. The defense minister, who is highly respected by the armed services,

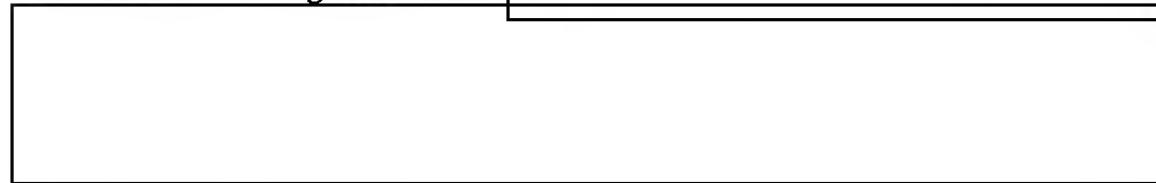
25X1 [redacted] fears army intervention if more extensive restrictions are put on the freedoms of press and opposition.

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Early this month the government used army and police in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent opposition leader Ismet Inonu's followers from gathering to greet him during his tour of the Aegean region. Inonu, whose popularity has increased as a result of the incidents, says he will continue to travel around the country, thus intensifying the pressure on the government to take further repressive measures against him.

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Soviet Prestige in Burma May Be Further Damaged by Libel Suit

Soviet prestige in Burma, damaged by the furor over the Soviet military attaché's recent attempt to defect, faces another setback in the coming libel trial of a TASS representative in Rangoon. The suit was filed by U Law Yone, the editor of the influential Rangoon Nation, who had been accused by the TASS representative of receiving \$34,-000 from the American Embassy.

After the TASS representative failed to appear in court on 8 May, a second warrant was issued, [even though Soviet Ambassador Shiborin had intervened with the Burmese foreign minister in an effort to have the case quashed.] The police have been unable to locate the defendant to serve either warrant, which will almost certainly lead the Burmese public to presume that he is hiding in the Soviet Embassy.

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Whatever course the embassy takes, it seems certain to suffer further embarrassment. Flight from Burma by the TASS representative, who has no diplomatic status, would invite strong censure; should he face trial, he is likely to be convicted.

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